
NURTURING BRAVE WRITERS

THE GOAL: TO SHIFT YOUR PARADIGM FROM WRITING INSTRUCTOR TO WRITING COACH AND ALLY.

Jumpy Frogs

There's a fundamental difference between the way professional writers talk about writing and the way educators teach it.

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MANY EDUCATORS APPROACH WRITING THE WAY A BIOLOGY TEACHER SEES A FROG—AS SOMETHING TO DISSECT IN A CLASSROOM.

PROFESSIONAL WRITERS APPROACH WRITING THE WAY A CHILD SEES A FROG—AS SOMETHING MYSTERIOUS AND JUMPY TO PLAY WITH. (BOGART)

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN YOUR CHILDREN'S WRITING:

- Flashes of insight
- Clever words
- Surprising detail
- Mastery of the material
- Fluidity of thought
- Writer's voice
- Personal experience that correlates with the information

CATCH YOUR CHILD IN THE ACT OF THINKING: JOT IT DOWN PRACTICE

- Listen for burst of verbal fluency and passion. Grab scrap paper. Write what the child is saying as close to verbatim as you can.
- When asked what you're doing, say, "Don't stop. I need to get this down. This is really interesting." And keep writing.
- Share it later (dinner time?) with family. Enjoy contents. Discuss.
- Read it again at another time. Lather, rinse, repeat.



RESEARCH

“C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Branon...pointed out [that] students produce assignments, not in order to be heard, but in order to give teachers something to judge on the basis of their agenda. Since the teacher’s agenda is usually the only one that matters, students have to puzzle out what the instructor wants—what in Knoblauch and Branon’s term constitutes the ‘Ideal Text.’

“To the extent that the teacher’s expectations are not satisfied,’ they explain, ‘authority over the writing is stolen from the writer by means of comments, oral and written, that represent the teacher’s agenda, whatever the writer’s intentions may initially have been.” That agenda distorts communication, when teachers, who alone know what Ideal Text they have in mind, display little interest in understanding anything that differs from it.”

(Growing Up Writing, Silberman, 55)

KIDS NEED TWO THINGS FROM PARENTS: FAITH AND FREEDOM.

"Perfectionism means that you try desperately not to leave so much mess to clean up. But clutter and mess show us that life is being lived... Tidiness suggests something is as good as it's going to get. Tidiness makes me think of held breath, of suspended animation, while writing needs to breathe and move."

(Bird by Bird Anne Lamott 28-29)

FREEWITING

"Freewriting teaches you to write without thinking about writing. We can usually speak without thinking about speech--without thinking about how to form words in the mouth and pronounce them and the rules of syntax we unconsciously obey--and as a result we can give undivided attention to what we say. Not so with writing. Or at least most people are considerably distracted from their meaning by considerations of spelling, grammar, rules, errors. Most people experience an awkward and sometimes paralyzing 'translating' process in writing: 'Let's see, how shall I say this?' Freewriting helps you learn to just say it. Regular freewriting helps make the writing process transparent."

(Writing with Power Peter Elbow 15)

NOTES



FREEWITES

Logan (age 10)

FIRST FREEWRITE

this is stupid and this is dumb

this is no fun

I want to quit this is stupid

I hate this

I hate this

I'm sick of it

I want to play with Gus

I want to shoot my gun

I want to go get on the computer

SECOND FREEWRITE

I want to go hunting with my dog and shoot five peasant and cook them in the fryer. and I would shoot 10 quail and cook them. I cook beef jerky and bring Gus in the house on the floor on Christmas Day. I would go out to the land and build a fire with my dog and go camping at Elk Mountain and climb to the top and repell of the side of it with us and I would go to Colrado and go skiing and Gus would ski to.

THIRD FREEWRITE

I want to go hunting a bear with my Dad and brother and my Gus and I will kill a 500 hundred lb. grizzlies and Gus killed a young bear and attacked and his paw was cut open and bleeding. I put a piece of bear fur on his toes to stop the bleed. I used a 10 gage slug. My Dad used a 22 wincsster and brother used a 45 magm hand gun and blew the brain clean out of the grizzlies head and Gus was tired.



Alan (age 12)

FREEWRITE

Trebuchets are cool and very neat. I'd like to have one. I also want a fourwheeler. except fourwheelers move and trebuchets don't. Trebuchets are very good siege weapons during the middle ages. Just like four wheelers are popular now. They were very destructive machines. They could shoot really far. They could even shoot me into the air. I watched a show on trebuchets and I learned alot and I built my own out of legos. It can shoot really far. Trebuchets were the equivalent of the atomic bomb during the middle ages. I would like one in my backyard and then I could crush the people I didn't like with my brothers who I would shoot out of the trebuchet.

Leanna (age 13)

FREEWRITE

running is so fast just the world feels like it will start running to pass someone up gives you encouragement when you run it feels like running from a predator especially when you run a race the wind howls in your ears even though there isn't any I feel like running even when I'm tired seeing people run reading their minds they have determination DO NOT fail! I don't know why but your feet just go when you stretch it's as boring as an ice cream lid but you know it's for the good working out it's so hard your muscles are like liquid when you are hurting you walk like a flamingo and a wobbling animal mix yet when you run you feel revied you have a pet skunk named goober you have to run from everything bad just imagine everything you hate behind you then just run away from it fast like anything I can't write it's silly my dog runs faster without even really trying then my hand hurts so when you run you can't feel like anything is holding you back.

NOTES

